

Your Chronic Pain Toolkit for Supported Self-Management

(Draft #3 3-13-2018, Michael Von Korff Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute)

A road map for chronic pain self-management

[Adapted from David Hanscomb's *Back in Control*, Vertus Press, Seattle WA (2012)]

Address anxiety. Pain increases anxiety. Through the use of mind–body principles it is possible to diminish pain-related anxiety, to reduce pain, and to foster more effective approaches to managing chronic pain.

Deal with anger. Chronic pain is frustrating and can engender anger about having chronic pain and about people or health care professionals who do not seem to understand the difficulties in living with chronic pain.

Shift from reactive to creative. Living with chronic pain can put patients in “survival mode” trying to get by day-to-day through conserving energy and minimizing pain. A key task is becoming engaged in living again, developing ways of reengaging in life activities, and shifting focus from pain to activities that are engaging, meaningful, and enjoyable.

Take back your life. Chronic pain can result in isolation, wherein friendships and family relationships become strained or atrophy because the person does not feel able to engage in activities or because limits on what he or she is able to do may conflict with what friends and family members want to do. A key task is restoring or building new nurturing relationships with friends and family.

Live a rich, full life. A person with chronic pain who has become inactive and passive needs to find ways of regaining hope for the future and reconnecting with activities that give life meaning and purpose.

The patient's role is to manage these challenges in managing chronic pain to reduce suffering and enhance quality of life. The role of health care providers is to offer patients effective tools, skills, knowledge and support in their journey to achieve these goals. The following toolkit offers evidence-based tools for reducing pain and enhancing quality of life for persons with chronic pain.

Your Chronic Pain Toolkit for Supported Self-Management

TASK	TOOL	WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
Understand pain management	Understanding that pain is influenced by your thoughts emotions and activities.	Your brain and spinal cord actively produce the experience of pain through interactions among thoughts, emotions and activities that increase or reduce pain signals from your body.
Use your mind and emotions to manage pain and to restore your quality of life	Mindfulness meditation	Mind-body techniques can modify brain networks to reduce bodily pain by reducing fear, anger and depression that often accompany chronic pain. Mind-body techniques can also help you engage in rewarding life activities to improve your quality of life.
	Deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation mini-practices	
	Identify and manage thoughts that increase pain	
	Identify and manage emotions that increase pain	
	Engage in enjoyable life activities	
Engage in physical activities that reduce pain and increase your quality of life.	Attention and diversion	These physical activities compete with bodily pain and activate brain chemicals that reduce pain. They can also help you resume life activities that contribute to your quality of life.
	Heat/cold, counter-stimulation (e.g. pinching other body parts)	
	Aerobic, stretching, strengthening activities	
	Yoga	
Use of emotions, thoughts and physical activities in combination to manage pain and enhance your quality of life.	Massage	These approaches combine psychological and physical techniques for controlling pain, managing negative thoughts and emotions that accompany chronic pain, resuming life activities, and enhancing quality of life.
	Pleasant events scheduling	
	Increasing activity levels gradually, step by step	
	Cognitive-behavioral therapy	
Safe and effective use of analgesics	Acceptance & commitment therapy	Analgesics can be helpful when used to reduce pain to tolerable levels so that you can be more active and employ mental, emotional and physical activities to reduce pain and enhance quality of life.
	Over the counter (non-prescription) analgesics	
	Medically prescribed analgesics	
Recovery	Topical analgesics, balms, etc.	These approaches can help persons with chronic pain re-engage in rewarding life activities and resume their roles in work, community and family life.
	Peer support	
	Goal setting and creative problem-solving	
	Activity-rest cycling, pacing	
	Workplace, environmental accommodations	
Health care team	Mobility and physical aids	Your health care team often can't cure chronic pain, but they may be able to support you in carrying out tasks and learning skills for managing chronic pain and restoring quality of life.
	Case manager, coach, PT/OT, Nurse, Physician, Psychologist, Chiropractor, Acupuncturist, Massage therapist, Rehabilitation specialist, etc.	